

I. VERIFICATION OF DEATH:

EMS personnel must verify death in any patient encounter. Never assume someone is dead until they have met the following criteria.

1. OBVIOUS DEATH injury/illness incompatible with life, and absent vital signs, including:
 - a. Decapitation
 - b. Explosive gunshot wound to the head without vital signs.
 - c. Decomposition
 - d. Rigor Mortis
 - e. Lividity
 - f. BLUNT TRAUMATIC ARREST meeting all the following criteria:
 1. Blunt mechanism only, with obvious trauma.
 2. No vital signs or other signs of life (movement, reactive pupils).
 3. Confirm with on-line medical control.

CAUTION: in cool environment, severely hypothermic patients may be cool, stiff, without vital signs, and in asystole or agonal rhythm. When in doubt, attempt resuscitation.

If in doubt for any other reason, contact on-line Medical Control.

2. EXPECTED DEATH: patients without vital signs whose death from natural causes was expected and who have one of the following:
 - a. An EMS/DNR bracelet or declaration in accordance with Utah DNR statute.
 - b. A DNR order (Medical Treatment Plan) signed by a physician and witnessed or notarized. Must verify with Medical Control.

CPR may be initiated until one of the above is verified, then may be discontinued.

3. All other patients should be considered potentially viable, including apparent deaths from natural causes and penetrating injuries. Begin appropriate resuscitation and contact Medical Control.

II. LAW ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS:

1. Limited Verification of Death. Absent carotid pulse, absent breathing, and meeting above criteria. Minimize contact with patient and avoid disturbing evidence when possible. If in doubt, begin resuscitation and contact Medical Control. (Includes gunshot wounds or apparent suicides which do not meet criteria for obvious death of expected death as above).
2. Notification of the Appropriate Agencies (such as the Medical Examiner) is the responsibility of:
 - a. The Investigating Officer or, if not present
 - b. Scene personnel or Medical Control pronouncing death.
3. Transport of Bodies. Ambulance personnel may transport a body after released by the investigating officer to:
 - a. Medical Examiner's office in M.E. cases.
 - b. Funeral home designated by family or Police/Sheriff in cases not under M.E. jurisdiction.
 - c. Nearest hospital E.R. if neither of above apply.
4. Medical Examiner Cases. The following situations fall under the jurisdiction of the State Medical Examiner and must be reported to them as per Section 26-4-7 of the State Medical Examiner Act:
 - a. Deaths by violence, gunshot, suicide, or accident, including highway accidents.
 - b. Sudden death while in apparent health.
 - c. Unattended deaths.
 - d. Deaths under suspicious or unusual circumstances.
 - e. Deaths resulting from diseases that may constitute a threat to the public health.
 - f. Death resulting from poisoning or overdose of drugs.
 - g. Deaths resulting from disease, injury, toxic effect or unusual exertion incurred within the scope of the deceased's employment.
 - h. Deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
 - i. Deaths resulting while the deceased was in prison, jail, in police custody, in the state hospital, or in a detention or medical facility operated for the treatment of the mentally ill or emotionally disturbed or delinquent persons.
 - j. Deaths associated with diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

The emergency teams should attempt to get back in service as soon as possible. Notification of the Medical Examiner should be turned over to the Police as per Section 26-4-8 of the Utah Medical Examiner Act.

**III. WHEN IN DOUBT, TREAT AS APPROPRIATE, RAPID
TRANSPORT, CONTACT MEDICAL CONTROL.**